

Joint Committee on Environment Members and HB5293 Sponsors,

As a local advocate for animal welfare, educator to youth organizations, schools, community functions, I implore you to vote **NO** to House Bill 5293 (HB5293). Connecticut already has extensive animal cruelty and welfare. Enforce those current laws! HB5293 is yet another superfluous law that will not accomplish its stated purpose and is nothing more than a solution looking for a problem. Are you aware this bill makes someone like me and my family criminals for presenting an animal education program with our tortoises, snakes, and lizards, or almost any animal to a school class?



I have been doing reptile education for several decades. First as a Municipal Police Officer with affiliations thru Beardsley Zoo, State of CT D.E.E.P., and local Animal Control Officers. My rescued pets have been from homes that can no longer afford or adequately care for their animals – and have responsibly contacted the above agencies – who in turn contacted me, knowing of my outreach program toward proper pet choices. My program puts curiosity back into children and adults alike. Having a close-up personal experience touching an animal otherwise viewed only through the glass of a zoo (or worse - a television/computer monitor). We inspire the wonder of our natural world by encouraging exploration of our backyards, parks and wooded areas.

Among other overreaching measures, this bill bans animal outreach programs before not only school students, but also Scout troops, fair exhibitions, and more, classifying such beneficial programs as inherently cruel. Those who would travel with their animals to teach schoolchildren about biology, conservation, and animal physiology will be made into criminals!

I also do not appreciate that a Connecticut legislator is misinforming people about this bill. There is not a blanket exemption for environmental education programs, as reported by at least one legislator. These programs are only allowed if the program is: administered by a facility accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, engaged in falconry in accordance with the provisions of section 26-67e of the general statutes, or permitted by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. While I would hope this misinformation by a legislator is unintentional, it seems to be intentionally misleading to deter opposition.

It seems HB5293 lacks research. For example, the bill would ban educational programs involving any non-domesticated animal. The fact is that this legislation is unnecessary. Punish the “bad actors” and the criminals. No new law is needed to protect animals as Connecticut can already prosecute animal abusers.

Superfluous and redundant laws are becoming commonplace. Tax dollars and legislative resources are continually being wasted to propose duplicative laws. Even worse, collective punishment is becoming an accepted practice in our government. Instead of focusing on criminals, many new laws choose to punish good citizens.

This bill is far-reaching and rife with unintended consequences, including making criminals out of those dedicated individuals who responsibly conduct educational programs with animals.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Please realize that HB5293 is illogical and unjust.

Have a good day.

Sincerely,

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